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CHRISTMAS EVE;

OR, THE

STORY OF POOR ANTHONY.

FROM THE GERMAN OF

CHRISTOPH SCHMID,

Canon of Augsburg.

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CHRISTMAS EVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHRISTMAS HYMN.



UPON Christmas eve, little ANTHONY (a fine child of eight years old) was passing, towards evening, through a snow-covered country. His

flaxen ringlets were whitened with frost; his head was protected only by a slight straw hat which he had worn the preceding summer; and his half-frozen cheeks were quite blue with cold. He was dressed like a soldier, in a smart scarlet hussar's jacket. In his hand he held a stout

plum-stick, and on his back he carried a little bag, containing all he had in the world. He was cheerful, however, and delighted at the sight of the beautiful winter landscape, with its hedges and bushes loaded with snow. The deep red sun had just set. The grass and the branches sparkled, and the tops of the firs in the neighbouring forest were gilded by its last rays.

Anthony conceived that there would be no difficulty in reaching a village on the other side of this forest, into which he fearlessly plunged, heedless of its thickness and obscurity; he hoped that he should be able to pass the Christmas holydays in that village, having heard that the inhabitants were rich and hospitable. Scarcely had he walked a quarter of an hour, when he missed the path, and became bewildered in the wildest part of the forest. Every moment he plunged deeper into the snow, and was often in great danger of falling into the pits, which were concealed beneath it. Night came on, and with it a cold wind arose; the sky was covered with clouds, which obscured the stars that had glistened through the dark firs. Darker shadows succeeded, and the snow began again to fall in

abundance. The poor boy had now lost all traces of a road, and knew not which way to direct his steps. Worn out with wandering for such a length of time, he could go no farther, and trembling with cold he began to cry. Placing his bundle on the ground, he knelt down by the side of it, and taking off his hat, he raised his benumbed hands to Heaven, and prayed for protection. He remembered that it was the eve of the Christmas festival “Was it not,” said he, “on this night, O gracious Father, that Thy dear Son our Saviour came into the world? Hear my prayer for His sake. Do not abandon me, when the whole world is rejoicing at the birth of the holy Child; let me not perish in this forest.” And laying his head on his little bundle, he sobbed violently.

Suddenly was heard from the adjacent bank some melodious sounds resembling the strings of a harp, and a delicious chant arose, which was echoed by the surrounding rocks. The child could have believed it to be a concert of angels. He arose, and with clasped hands listened. The wind had now ceased, and a pro-

found stillness had succeeded. Anthony then distinctly heard these words :

Oh ! be consoled in every care ;
See here thy God, with mercy rare,
His Son has sent from heav'n :
Confide in Him, and courage take ;
What evil is, He good can make,
And life for thee has given.

The hymn ceased, and nothing was heard but a few soft notes of the harp still echoing faintly. Anthony was overcome. " Ah ! " said he, " I feel as the shepherds of Bethlehem must have felt when they heard the celestial music of that holy night. I will take courage, and vex myself no more ; there must surely be charitable people near, who will pity me ; for I am led to hope that, as they sing like angels, they may also be as kind as they."

Taking up his knapsack, he approached the spot from which he fancied the sweet song had reached him. He had walked but a few steps when he perceived a ray of light, which disappeared in a moment, then beamed anew, and continued to appear and disappear, but with in-

creased brightness. Anthony joyfully hurried on, and found himself before a lonely house in the middle of the forest. He knocked several times at the door; but although he heard voices and merriment within, no one replied. He then attempted to open the door, and succeeded. He felt his way for some time in the dark, until, arriving at the room where the party were assembled, he was struck with astonishment and delight. He was dazzled with the brilliancy of the illumination, and fancied that heaven itself was opened before him.

In one corner of the room, between two case-ments, stood a beautiful landscape, a miniature imitation of nature in its most delightful season; it presented the appearance of a mountainous country, with moss-covered rocks, verdant pine-woods, rural cottages, flocks feeding by their shepherds, and a little town on the top of the mountain. In the centre of the scene was a rocky grotto, where was seen the blessed Virgin, the infant Jesus, the pious Joseph, and the adoring shepherds; above whom were angels hovering in the air, their countenances beaming with joy. The entire landscape shone with

wonderful brightness ; it seemed to be spangled with thousands of little stars ; and it glittered like the dew-besprinkled green of the fields in a spring morning.

The inmates were assembled round this representation of the infant Jesus in his manger. On one side was the father with a harp, and on the other was seated the mother, with the youngest of her children on her knee. There were also a little boy and girl, who were regarding the manger with great devotion, and raising their hands in imitation of the pious shepherds kneeling before the Saviour.

The father again touched his harp, and the mother sang with a sweet voice the succeeding verse of that hymn of which Anthony had heard a part. The two children united their sweet clear tones to the fine bass notes of their father, and sang :

And if in need a wretched child
Within thy gate intrude,
Repulse him not, but accents mild
Bestow on him,—in gratitude
For all God gives ; and let him share
Thy fire and hospitable fare.

Poor Anthony remained standing at the open door, with the latchet of the door in one hand, and in the other his hat and stick. He could not take his eyes off the beautiful picture of the manger, and he listened with open mouth to the song and the harp. No one observed him until the mother, feeling the draft of air from the door, turned her head. "Good heavens!" exclaimed she, "what brings this child at this time of night through the thick forest here?—Poor boy! you must have missed your road?"

"Alas, yes," said the child, "I have lost my way in the forest."

All eyes were now turned towards the door. The two children felt great pity for the little boy; but they were too timid to move from their places, as he was a stranger. The mother going towards him, asked him in a friendly tone, "Where do you come from, my little fellow; what is your name; and who are your parents?"

"Alas!" said Anthony, his eyes filling with tears, "I have now no home. My name is Anthony Croner; my father died in the war, and last autumn I lost my mother through grief and

distress. I am quite a stranger in this country, and I am wandering about the world like a strayed lamb.

He then began to relate how he had been bewildered in the forest; and how having heard their singing, he had been guided to their house. He would have continued to speak, but was unable from the effects of cold.

“Poor Anthony,” said the mother, “you are half perished with cold, and you must also be hungry and tired. Put down your bundle, and sit you down, and you shall have some nice hot soup, and what else remains of our supper.” The two children, Christian and Catherine, took from him his hat, his stick, and his knapsack, after which they led their little guest to the supper-table, where their mother had ready for him some soup, a large piece of cake, and some stewed plums. She seated herself opposite to him, and smiled on him so kindly, that he seemed to eat with still better appetite. The children gladly shared with him their Christmas gifts—fine rosy-cheeked apples, golden pears, and large brown nuts. The soup made the poor child

feel much better, and the gentle warmth of the room soon quite restoring him, he recovered his vivacity and good spirits.

“But what is that beautiful thing in the corner of the room?” said he at last; for while he was eating, he had constantly kept his eyes on the picture. “It looks to me like spring in the middle of winter; I never saw any thing so fine in my life. May I look at it a little nearer?” and he advanced towards it, followed by the two children.

“Do you know what all this represents!” asked Catherine.

“To be sure I do,” replied Anthony; “it is the birth of Jesus Christ.”

“But that is not the real child Jesus,” said Catherine. “Jesus is no longer a child, but went up into heaven a long time ago.”

“I know all that,” replied Anthony; “do you take me for a heathen? Two thousand years are nearly passed away since the holy Jesus was a child in the manger. Is not that the town of Bethlehem up there?” Catherine nodded assent. “You see, then,” said Anthony,

“that I know it all, and am not so ignorant as you took me for.”

The children began to amuse themselves in pointing out to Anthony many little things, which, however, were to them of great importance. “Look, Anthony,” cried Catherine; “look at this beautiful sheep with the white frizzy wool, and the two little lambs at its side. See the rest of the flock are browsing near them; and yonder is the shepherd playing on his pipe. At night he sleeps in that pretty little red house upon wheels.”

“And pray,” said Christian, “look at the little spring which, oozing from the rock like a silver thread, spreads itself in the lake below. See also the two white swans with such arching necks, which are swimming on the lake, and reflecting themselves in its clear and quiet water.”

“And further off,” said Catherine, “is a young shepherdess coming quickly down the hill, carrying on her head a covered basket. I dare say it is full of eggs or apples.”

In this way the children spent their evening,

remarking every thing, from the smallest snail on the rock, to the shining shells which covered the edge of the lake.

“All this is very pretty,” said Anthony; “but the finest of all is the divine Child’s face; for it was for the sake of the Child whose picture you here see that our heavenly Father has this night saved me from my great distress.”



CHAPTER II.

POOR ANTHONY'S STORY.



THE father of the family which had received Anthony was a game-keeper and forester. During the time that the children were conversing in this manner, he sat in his arm-chair by the fire-place, apparently absorbed in profound meditation. His wife approached him with her baby in her arms, and, after a moment or two, said, "Why are you so silent? What are you thinking of?"

"I am thinking of the last lines of the song we have been singing," answered he. "By warming and feeding this poor child, you have done what is there spoken of; but it seems to me that we might do still more. We are now celebrating the anniversary of that holy night in which the divine Infant was born for us men

and for our salvation. In this same night God sends us a child whom we may be the means of saving. Elizabeth, give me frankly your opinion ; what ought we to do ?”

“Receive him,” said his wife, joyfully. “Has not He who was born on this night, said, What ye do to the least of these among you, you do it unto Me? and Anthony appears to me to be a very good, mild, and yet noble-minded child ; his manner is so devout, so innocent ; and even when imploring charity, he has not a bold or impertinent air. His parents must surely have been respectable people. Where five persons can be supported, there is also enough for six. We will keep this child.”

“You are a worthy good woman,” said the forester, pressing her hand ; “God will reward you, and will repay to your own children all that you do for this poor stranger. But we will first talk to him, and find out whether he is deserving the good we intend him.—“Come here, Anthony,” said the forester aloud.

Anthony advanced, and placed himself before him, like a soldier before his officer.

“Your father, then, was a soldier, and died in

his country's service. It is an honourable death, although for you it was very sad. Now tell us something about your parents. Where did you live before the war? How was your father killed? What was the cause of your mother's death? What brought you into this forest? Speak; we are listening."

Anthony then related as follows: "My father, when he was addressed by the hussars, was called quarter-master. Our regiment was in garrison at Glatz in Silesia. My mother gained a good deal by needlework, at which she was very clever. My father came home in great haste one day, and told us that war was declared, and that we must be off to-morrow. He had a great deal of courage, and made up his mind to it; but my mother wept bitterly, and was much alarmed. She would not allow him to go alone, not being able to bear the separation. She entreated him so earnestly to take us with him, that at last he consented. We travelled very, very far. Suddenly the word was heard, 'The enemy advances!' My father and his hussars hastened to meet them, while my mother and I remained behind. The noise of the cannons

alarmed us dreadfully. My mother said to me. 'Every shot appears to pierce through my heart; for who knows that that very ball may not have reached the heart of your poor father?' All the time that the firing was heard, we continued to weep and pray; but happily my father returned safe. Thus things continued for some time, until one day after a skirmish, my father's horse was led home by a hussar, who told us that he was dangerously wounded, and dying on the field of battle, about half a mile off. We hastened to him, and found him lying under a tree, while an old soldier was kneeling by him, supporting his head on his breast, and attended by two other hussars. He had been struck by a ball in the chest, and was already as pale as death. He fixed his dying eyes sadly upon me and my mother, then turned them to heaven, and in a few moments heaved his last sigh. My mother and I burst into tears. He was buried in a neighbouring cemetery, and the funeral was attended by several officers and a great many soldiers. It seems to me that I still hear the strange melancholy sound of the trumpets. The last honours were paid by several shots being

fired over his grave. My mother and I were so much affected by this sad mark of respect, that it appeared to us almost as if they were firing upon ourselves. The soldiers dried their tears as they left the grave ; but we were inconsolable. My mother wished to return to her own country. She had no relations there, but several acquaintances who she hoped would receive us. She reckoned upon gaining her livelihood by her needle ; but we had not travelled many days before she fell sick, and with the greatest difficulty we reached a little hamlet. When we arrived there no one would receive us, and our only shelter was a barn. My mother's illness increased every moment. She sent for a clergyman, and prepared herself for death. When night came on, the countrywoman to whom the barn belonged, said to my mother, ' Since you are so ill, I am willing to do something for you.' And she brought us an old lantern in which a little oil was burning, and which she hung to a beam. Her good offices stopped there ; and after wishing us a good night, she troubled herself no more about us. I remained alone with my mother, seated on a truss of straw, and

weeping bitterly. Towards midnight, it appeared to me that my mother became paler and paler. Holding out her hand to me, she said, 'Do not weep, dear Anthony. Be always innocent and pious; love to pray; keep God always before your eyes, and He will provide you with another father and mother.' Those were her last words. She remained praying for some time, with her eyes lifted up to heaven, and then expired. I could only cry. The countryman and his wife had faithfully promised my mother to receive and treat me like their own child. They took possession of the little she had left, some gowns and a small sum of money; but before three weeks had passed away, they turned me out, saying that I had already cost them three times as much as my mother had left. I took my departure, intending to go to Glatz to my school-fellows. But the country people could not show me the way to Silesia, and I begged my way through the country, without knowing where I was going, or what would become of me."

The forester's wife was much affected, and turning to her children with tearful eyes, "See,

my dears," said she, "what your fate might be; you might also lose your father and mother; and what would you do? Pray to God every day to preserve them to you.—I see very well, my dear Anthony, that your parents were worthy people; but have you no papers which belonged to them?"

"To be sure I have," said Anthony, taking a pocket-book out of his bundle. "My mother placed these papers in my hand when she was dying. She desired me to take great care of them, and never to part with them; but I think I may show them to you."

The papers consisted of the certificate of his parents' marriage, of his own baptism, and the death of his father. The latter had been written by the chaplain of the regiment, and the colonel had added a very honourable testimony of the courage and good conduct of the quarter-master as well as that of his widow.

"All this is very satisfactory," said the forester; "but now, Anthony, tell me how do you like being amongst us?"

"So well," answered Anthony, joyfully, "that I feel as if I were at home."

“Would you like to stay with us?”

“Better than any where else. Your wife is as gentle as my mother was, and you are very kind too; and your mustachios are exactly like those my father used to wear.”

At this the forester laughed.

“Well,” said he, “stay with us, my boy. I will be your father, and Elizabeth will treat you like her own child. Your part will be to prove yourself a good child to us, and to love your new brother and sisters. Do you hear, you are now my son, Anthony.”

The child remained for some moments staring at the good man, in doubt whether he spoke seriously or not. He had so often been unkindly treated, that he could now hardly believe that the forester really intended to adopt him as his son.

“Well, Anthony,” said the latter, “will you not accept us?”

The child burst into tears, held out his hand to the forester, kissed that of his wife, and embraced the three children as if he was their real brother. Christian and Catherine were very much pleased to keep Anthony, and thus to gain

a new playfellow. The forester then addressed Anthony in a serious manner.

“ You perceive, my dear, that God has had your fate in His keeping. The blessing of your good parents rests upon you. God has heard the prayer of your dying mother, and also that which you addressed to Him in the forest. He led you here. Had you not heard our hymn, you would have fallen asleep on the snow, and I should have found you to-morrow dead in the wood. God has saved you ! In this holy night, while our hearts were penetrated with love and gratitude towards Him, He brought you to our lonely dwelling, which perhaps in daylight you would not have discovered. To God and to His blessed Son you owe the asylum which you have found ; to that blessed Jesus who, on this same night, nearly two thousand years ago, came into the world, and afterwards died for us all. Acknowledge these mercies, and all your life long be grateful towards God and towards your Saviour. Have God always before you ; and behave as a Christian ought to do.”

Anthony promised to follow this good advice. His wife showed the child a small room with a

nice clean bed ; and they all resigned themselves to repose with contented hearts. The next morning the children were again gathered together round the representation of the infant Jesus in the manger ; and during Christmas-day, and the holydays which followed it, it was a great delight to them. But this innocent pleasure had very nearly been spoiled. A certain young Mr. de Schilf, a great sportsman, who often visited the forester, came one day into the room. He took upon himself to make great fun of this manner of picturing to the children the manger of Jesus, and said that he could not imagine what use it was of.

“Of what use?” said the forester. “Look out of the window, young sir ; see the earth covered with snow, and the trees bending beneath the weight of it ; not a flower is to be seen but what is formed by the ice against the panes of glass. Our trees are stripped of their leaves and fruit, and whitened by frost ; and icicles hang from our roof. These poor children are imprisoned in this room ; the cold prevents their stepping out of the house. Is there, then, any harm in parents endeavouring to procure them

some instructive amusement? This miniature landscape, with its verdant woods, its flower-enamelled fields, its sheep feeding by their shepherds, recalls spring to their recollection, and forms nearly the only pleasure which they can enjoy during the winter. But that is the least of it. We Christians rejoice, during the Christmas holydays, over all that God's infinite bounty has manifested to us in the person of Jesus under a human form. The greatest painters in those pictures which have been the admiration of ages, have endeavoured to represent this divine story. I have myself, when travelling, passed by Dresden, and have often admired that master-piece which represents the birth of Jesus, and is known by the name of the Holy Night. The criticisms which you may be pleased to bestow upon my performance, imperfect as it is, may also be raised against that superb picture; and therefore they need not be refuted. Besides, as these precious pictures are only painted for the rich, they would have no value in the eyes of children. I am sure that mine would not exchange their manger for the much-extolled Dresden picture. Allow us, then, my dear sir, to retain our fathers'

ancient manners. I remember that when I was a child the picture of the manger was my greatest delight; and it was not without its use to me. May it also become for my children a source of joy and of blessing !”



CHAPTER III.

THE FORESTER'S FAMILY.



THE keeper who had adopted the poor orphan was an honest and good man. Religious, and benevolent towards every body, he unceasingly endeavoured to fulfil his duty to the utmost, and towards his prince he was thoroughly faithful. His way of living was precisely the same as that of his ancestors. His first employment in the morning was to join in prayer with his wife and children; and he ended the day in the same manner. "How could we do less," said he, "than lift up our thoughts to Him who gives us life and nourishment, and who showers upon us all kinds of benefits? It must, I think, be a touching spectacle even for angels to see a father and mother

kneeling surrounded by their children, filled with gratitude, and lifting their hands and thoughts to God. The heavenly Father, at such a sight, will surely bless them." Before and after meals, also, the family addressed God.

One day Mr. Schilf having accompanied the forester home, and entering just as the soup was about to be put on the table, was invited to stay dinner. The young gentleman seated himself, without waiting to utter any prayer. But the keeper, always candid and frank, said to him, "For shame, sir; it is in this manner that the wild beasts of the forest behave; they swallow the acorns without considering by whom they are sent." The young man endeavoured to excuse himself, by saying that it was of very little consequence whether one uttered a prayer or not at sitting down to dinner. The forester then answered with great earnestness, "Whatever tends to make us better is of consequence. Piety is to be desired for every reason; but never did I find that forgetfulness of God brought about good results; quite the contrary. Join us, therefore, in prayer, as it becomes a good Christian and a reasonable creature to do, or this will

be your last day's sporting with me. I will partake of nothing in common with a heathen, nor will I even seat myself at the same table with him. But I am sure," added he, more calmly, "that you did it without reflection. You have seen young men seat themselves at table without grace, and you have imitated them, thinking that it made you appear more fashionable."

The happiest moments of the worthy forester were those he passed surrounded by his family. "Why," said he, "should I go far away to seek for pleasure, when the sweetest of all is at home?" When his work was finished, he quietly remained at home, chatting with his wife, or relating amusing and instructive stories to his children. When he was in particularly high spirits he would take his harp. "It is a very good amusement," said he, "for the long winter evenings." In his youth he had played on the horn, but the physician had forbidden him to do so again; and as he was fond of music, he had taken to the harp. His wife knew several pretty songs; and he played the accompaniment to them on this instrument. Even the children

had learned some little childish verses, and they sang them all together, like the birds in the wood. The children frequented the parish school of Eschenthal. Christian and Catherine commenced school again as soon as the Christmas holydays were over, and the roads passable. Anthony was delighted to accompany them; and he soon surpassed all his companions. His love of study and his capacity were extraordinary. When the forester in the evening returned from shooting, and seated himself in his easy chair by the fire, he would make the children give him a recital of what they had learnt at school, and show him their copybooks. Anthony's account was always the best; his handwriting the neatest; and he very soon knew how to read extremely well. When the children after supper took their turns of reading, Anthony was always heard with the greatest pleasure. The good wife said that he read so naturally, that if one did not see the book in his hand, one would fancy he was relating a story.

The children dearly loved Sunday. The forester did not shoot on that day; and he was able to pass the whole day at home. "I am

occupied," said he, "for six days in the week, without cessation, in my prince's service; but the Sunday is devoted to the worship of a more powerful master; besides which, my labourers and I are very glad of a day of rest."

Quite early in the morning, the father, mother, and children, all repaired to the church of Eschenthal. The road to it lay partly through woody banks, and partly through narrow valleys, surrounded by bush-covered rocks and high trees. "Oh, how beautiful is the forest!" would Anthony say at such times: "how charming is the green of the trees in the splendour of the setting sun! It appears to me that the wood is still more beautiful on a Sunday; the green is of a softer hue; and the song of the birds is gayer; and the silence which reigns around—there is nothing to be heard but the church-bell sounding afar off. It is all as quiet and as calm here as in the church itself."

"Yes, there is something almost as solemn here as in a church," said the forester. "The forest is also the Lord's temple. The Almighty has placed these trees here like columns, which, joining their branches, form a roof of leaves.

Every thing, from that enormous oak covered with moss, to this little lily of the valley growing at our feet, proclaims His power. Yes, the whole earth, and as high as the vault of heaven, is a temple of His magnificence. Above all, on a Sunday, we ought to adore Him, and regard such beautiful works with devotion. Here, in this temple of His forming, we acknowledge His incomprehensible greatness and magnificence; but it is in our churches, although built by the hands of men, that He reveals the decrees of His sacred will. It was also to this end that the Son of God became man, that he taught men, and ordered them to preach to all the world. In all the places of worship in Christendom His doctrine is made known to thousands of men. For that reason, my children, when you are at church, listen to every word the preacher says, and retain them all in your hearts."

Such was the conversation which he held with his children in going to church: and on their return he spoke to them of the service; and they all eagerly related what they could remember of it. But, above all other times, their

Sunday's dinner was the best, because the forester on week-days eat his dinner in the wood, whereas he was now ready to help his children with the kindest attention. "Eat, my dears, eat," he would say; "and thank God for His mercies." On rising from table, he walked out with them, pointed out the different trees and plants, praising their beauty and various uses. "Thus has God," said he, "embellished even the smallest plant, and made it useful to man." During the spring and summer months his wife would spread the dinner under a large lime-tree near the house. The good man played the harp; and the birds joined their songs to those of the family. Anthony was perfectly happy in the society of these worthy people, under whose roof reigned unanimity, love, true piety, industry, and contentment. He was very grateful to God for having conducted him to the habitation of such a family; and he was full of the most obliging attentions towards his adopted parents. When the forester returned in the evening, Anthony ran to meet him, found him his slippers, and his old grey coat faced with green. When the wife was busied in cooking, he brought her

the wood, endeavoured to assist her, and forestalled all her wishes. He really could be of some use to his adopted father. The latter was making out a plan of all the woods entrusted to his care; he coloured them, and wrote at the side in large letters the name of each of them, adding a wreath of the leaves of such trees as each wood contained. Anthony was very soon able to draw these plans; and he succeeded so well in ornamenting them, that the forester was astonished. At one time he would draw an oak, against which was hung a shield bearing the name of the wood, while at the side was a wild boar seeking for acorns. At another time the name of the wood was engraved upon a rock surmounted by firs, and at the foot of the rock lay a stag. Anthony soon showed a decided taste for drawing; he employed every leisure moment in pencilling or painting landscapes, animals, birds, flowers, or trees. He was never idle. The forester and his wife loved this good child as well as if he had been their own; and their children, excited by Anthony's example, became more obliging and more active than they had ever been before.

CHAPTER IV.

CONTINUATION OF ANTHONY'S STORY.



THE forester one day commissioned Anthony to carry some woodcocks to the castle of Felseck, which was in the neighbourhood, and belonged to the prince. The agent had a guest whom he wished to treat with this game. In his way thither Anthony passed a cascade, which, emerging from among the dark pines, fell from the top of a rock as white as snow. At a little distance he perceived a gentleman who was sketching the cascade; and drawing near enough to him to see the sketch, he exclaimed, "Oh, how beautiful! that is indeed a picture!" He requested to be allowed to see this beautiful performance a little nearer. "It looks," said he, "as if this paper were a look-

ing-glass, in which is reflected in miniature the cascade with the trees and rocks around it. How clear is this water bubbling from the rock ! and what a fine effect that white foam has on the moss-covered stones ! and how fresh is the tender green which covers the stone,—it invites one to take hold of it ! how boldly those firs rear their heads towards heaven ! and that stag, which you have just painted drinking at the brook, how natural it is ! it stands so lightly, that one fancies it can run swiftly ; while the stags that I draw all look as if they were lame—I cannot give them any life.”

The candid praise of the young boy charmed the painter ; but what pleased him still more was the taste which he showed for the art.

“ So you are also a little painter ? ” said he to him.

“ Oh ! ” said Anthony, “ until this moment I fancied myself not a little, but a great painter ; but now I see that I am neither the one nor the other.”

“ And yet I should very much like to see what you have done,” replied the artist, “ I shall come and see you, and you shall show

them to me. Who are your parents? Where do you live?"

"Alas!" said Anthony, "I am a poor orphan. Mr. Grünewald, the forester, has given me a home."

"I suppose," said the painter, "you are some relation of his: perhaps a nephew?"

"No," replied Anthony; "I came as a stranger to his house; he and his wife received me at once, and treated me like their own child."

"That was a good action," said the painter; "but let me hear all about it." And Anthony related his whole story.

The artist, after listening attentively, said to him, "The forester and his wife seem to be very worthy people. Salute them from me, and tell them that to-morrow I shall come to see them, and thank them in the name of humanity for the love they have shown to you."

The painter's name was Riedinger. He had been a few days at the manor-house for the purpose of renovating some old pictures. He took advantage of the opportunity to sketch some of the mountain scenery which he admired so much. On the morrow after this conversation

he visited the forester. These two men suited each other extremely well, and became great friends. The painter wished much to see Anthony's drawings. The forester's wife kindly praised them. "Believe me," said she, "they are excellently done." Anthony stayed by the door, covered with blushes. "Indeed, Mr. Riedinger," said he, "there is nothing to see." But as the painter pressed him to show them to him, he went for them. Mr. Riedinger looked them over with great attention, and smiled frequently. He was much pleased with them, notwithstanding their numerous faults. "Really," said he, "this child may become a good painter. Leave him to me, Mr. Grünewald, and he will be the cause of much happiness to you."

"With all my heart," said the forester, giving him his hand. "For some time past I have been in doubt what to make of him. He will soon be fourteen years old; and he knows all that the school at Eschenthal can teach him. He is too delicate and too tender-hearted to make a sportsman of. He has more of the mild character of his mother than of his courageous father. If you fancy that he can ever be made a

good painter of, take and teach him. What do you ask a lesson?"

"What do I ask?" said the artist; "do not let us talk of that. You have taught me by your example how poor orphans ought to be treated: one good action leads to many more; they follow one another as a matter of course. Have no anxiety about him. As soon as I have finished my work at the castle, I shall take Anthony to the town; and I will spare no pains to make him a first-rate artist."

Anthony leaped with joy. But when, at the end of three or four days, the painter's carriage stopped at the door, and the time arrived for leaving home, the poor child wept bitterly. But the forester said to him, "Do not weep, Anthony; it is not far from this to the town; we shall often go to see you, and you can easily get home on Sundays and holydays.—I make one condition," said he to Mr. Riedinger, "that Anthony may sometimes come to see us; and especially that he may always spend the Christmas holydays with us. You must allow this."

"Willingly; and if you and your wife do not dislike it, I will bring him home myself."

They then shook hands. Anthony again thanked his adopted parents. They advised him to pay the greatest respect to the master who had such kind intentions towards him. Anthony got into the carriage of his new protector amidst the blessings of the family.

The good painter was punctual to his promises. It was a real pleasure to him to direct the studies of one who had so much capability. He often came to visit the forester; and even passed some days with him, in order to sketch the surrounding scenery. He never failed to speak in praise of his scholar. "Between ourselves," said he to the forester, "he will be a much cleverer artist than I am." After some years Mr. Riedinger being at the forester's house for the Christmas holydays with Anthony, who was now become a fine young man, he remained alone with the forester and his wife after supper. Anthony and the children had been some time in bed. The good people soon saw that Mr. Riedinger had something particular to say to them. At last he thus began: "Anthony knows all that I can teach him: he must now travel—he must go to Italy—it will cost a good deal, it

is true, but no money can be better employed ; and I will answer for the money in time returning a rich interest. The expenses of such a journey are far beyond the means of a private individual ; but a thought has struck me : Anthony will himself make something, but he will want assistance, as it is necessary that he should have time to perfect himself in his art. I shall contribute as much as I possibly can ; for, encouraged by your example, I am determined to make Anthony a painter without any expense to himself. His works have already paid me very well. I have put this money aside, and I shall employ it in paying his journey ; but it will not be nearly enough. Will you be disposed to supply the sum which is still wanting ? I ought to tell you that it will be a considerable one ; but ought we not to finish a work so well begun ?”

The forester had seen Anthony’s good conduct and improvement with great pleasure. His fortune was considerable. He looked at his wife, who answered him with a nod of approbation. So, striking the painter’s hand, he said, “ If the sum be within my means he shall have it.”

A calculation of the expenses of the journey

was quickly made ; and it was unanimously resolved that Anthony should set out in the next spring. The following day the painter and his pupil mounted their sledge to return to town ; and during the winter the forester and his wife made preparations for Anthony's journey.

The good man bought some cloth, that his adopted son might be properly clothed. He brought out his travelling trunk, and had it fresh covered with doe-skin. His wife and two daughters worked most industriously to fill it with linen. In the beginning of spring he came again to pass a few days at home. His adopted father showed him the greatest affection, and gave him some more advice full of wisdom and prudence. He took upon himself the trouble of packing his things.

The trunk was sent on before to a celebrated artist, to whom Mr. Riedinger had recommended Anthony, who wished to travel on foot. Christian, his intimate friend, made him a present of a little portmanteau, in which he could carry every thing he required for daily use.

At last the hour of departure arrived. After dinner, Anthony wished to go again to Mr.

Riedinger, and to start from thence. They dined together for the last time. It was an affecting family feast. The forester looked around; but all were silent. "Come, my children, be not so sorrowful; and you also, dear wife, dry your tears. We cannot help it. When sons grow up, they must go out into the world; and you too, my daughters, you are getting near the age of quitting perhaps your father's roof. But even when mountains and valleys shall separate us, our spirits will be always together. However sad may be the parting, we shall one day meet again either here or in heaven." The worthy man succeeded at last in making them more cheerful. He produced a bottle of good wine, of a sort kept expressly for feast-days, and poured out a glass a piece for his wife and daughters. "We must give wine to those in affliction," said he, smiling. Anthony and Christian held out their glasses without any pressing. At the end of the meal the forester lifted his glass and said, "A good journey to you, Anthony, and a happy return!"

"God grant it!" said his wife; and they all drank with the same good wishes.

"It is now time to part," continued the forester:

then rising he said, "Kneel down, my dear son, that I may give you a father's blessing." Anthony knelt down. The forester raised his eyes to heaven; his countenance and his whole figure had a look of solemnity. He blessed the young man, and added, "May God accompany thee in all thy ways; may He preserve thee from sin, and return thee to our arms good and pure!" The mother and children stood devoutly around with joined hands and tearful eyes; and all uttered a faltering amen. The forester raised Anthony, and pressing him in his arms said, "Go, and God be with you. Keep Him ever before your eyes, and forget not that His eye constantly follows you. Forget not, too, what you owe to yourself. The wealth and pleasures of this world are not worth the trouble with which we burden our conscience for their sake. Reflect that we are not created merely for this short life, but that there is an eternity to come. Avoid every temptation to do evil; avoid, above all things, the company of those men who ridicule the faith of their forefathers, and who make a mockery of religion and pure morality. Once more, adieu, and may God be with you!"

The whole family accompanied the young man a little way. At last he bid them a final farewell, and proceeded on his way ; but they remained on the same spot for some time. Anthony frequently turned and waved his hat to them, and the forester and Christian returned an answer in the same manner. The wife and daughters waved their white handkerchiefs, until the young traveller, stick in hand and knapsack on back, disappeared behind a wooded hill.



CHAPTER V.

THE CHRISTMAS GIFT.



THE third anniversary of Christmas eve had arrived since the departure of Anthony. The keeper returned on that day earlier from the forest with his son Christian. It was extremely cold; the rays of the setting sun gilded the windows of the room; the round panes of glass began already to be covered with ice, and shone like diamonds in the red light of the sky. The forester seated himself in his arm-chair near the stove. He stirred the fire; the flame arose, and shed an uncertain light through the room, and, reflected in the windows, added to the brilliancy of the frozen panes.

The wife entered the room. "Has any letter arrived from Anthony?" asked her husband.

"No," replied she, sorrowfully.

"It is very odd," said he, shaking his head ;
"we have always had a letter from him on Christmas eve. He wrote so circumstantially, that his letters were one of the greatest pleasures of the day to me. What can the boy be about, to prevent his writing ?"

Hardly had the forester uttered these words when the door opened, and a man appeared at it. His hair was whitened with frost. He held a letter in his hand, and bore on his back a flat deal case of considerable width, and so high that he was obliged to stoop to get into the room with it.

"This case must contain a looking-glass," said Catherine.

The man presented a letter to the forester, and put down the case.

"It comes from the painter Mr. Riedinger," said the forester : "what can it mean ? I almost fear that something may have happened to poor Anthony." He opened the letter hastily, and read it by the light of the fire. "Only imagine," said he, joyfully, "Anthony sends us a picture from Rome for our Christmas present. He has directed it to Mr. Riedinger, and begged him

to put it into a fine gilt frame, and to take care that we had it without fail on Christmas eve. The picture is a real masterpiece, so Mr. Riedinger says. Anthony is really an excellent young man; would that I could embrace him! Catherine," added he, "bring this good man a glass of wine while supper is preparing. It will do him good, for the cold is intense out of doors."

The carrier was thankful for the wine, but declined any thing more, saying that he was going to spend the holydays with his friends at Eschen-thal.

"Now," said the forester, "come all of you and sit down by me. Mr. Riedinger's letter encloses one from Anthony, and I will read it to you."

Louisa hastened to bring a light, that her father might more easily read. The contents were as follows:—

"MY DEAR FATHER,—You will receive with this a Christmas present,—a picture, with which I have taken a great deal of pains. It represents our Saviour in the manger. Several artists have assured me, that I have been successful in it. I

only wish that it may give you half the pleasure that I felt on seeing the representation of the infant Jesus in the manger, on the night that I first entered your house, in which case your pleasure will not be trifling. Would that I could accompany my picture, and give it you myself! It is true that Italy is a superb country. I am writing to you in November; you have already had some winter. The roof of your house, the fir-trees and the oaks, already, with you, groan under their weight of snow; while here the orange and lemon trees are charming us with their silver flowers and golden fruit. Nevertheless, in the midst of all this magnificence, I sigh for your rustic hearth, by which I have passed the happiest moments of my life. It is to your kindness that I owe the means of seeing the fine sky of Italy, and becoming an artist, should I ever deserve the name. It was your representation of the manger which first awoke my talent. It is always before my eyes; and however fine are the masterpieces which I have had an opportunity of seeing here, they do not produce the same delightful effect on me as that did. The happy years of childhood are, however, so

sweet, that all is embellished by the brilliancy of our early dawn : what a pity it is that they should pass so quickly ! When you are reading my letter and looking at my picture, I shall be with you in spirit. My heart beats afresh, when I remember how I came for the first time to your house half dead with cold ; how our kind mother restored me by her warm food ; how you adopted me for your son ; and how Christian, Catherine, and Louisa, shared with me their Christmas gifts. Oh, my beloved father, I kiss with gratitude your venerable hands, and those of my adopted mother ; I embrace my brother and sisters ; and I rejoice already in the anticipation of being able to say to you myself in a few years, how much I am, with all my heart,

“ Your grateful and affectionate son,

“ ANTHONY.

“ *Rome, November 15, 1756.*”

“ ‘There is a nice letter,’ said the forester. ‘All that we have done for this good young man is but little. I never could have thought that he would have been the cause of so much happiness to me. But here is supper waiting for

us ; we will look at the picture when we have finished."

" Oh no," said they all with one accord.

" We would much rather see the picture than eat," said Louisa ; " but I will fetch another light, that we may examine it better."

Christian opened the case. " Oh, how beautiful ! how charming !" cried they all together. " What heavenly figures ! and the colouring is not to be surpassed."

The forester placed the picture on a little table near the wall, and set a light on either side of it. All eyes were fixed on the brilliant performance. The forester's wife devoutly joined her hands, saying, " Truly, nothing can be more beautiful ! I seem almost to have been myself at the manger. In what a loving and gracious manner the holy Child looks at one ; it appears as if upon His very arrival into the world, He would greet us kindly ! And Mary, kneeling before the crib—how her eyes, full of tender affection, rest upon the Child, whom she holds in one arm, while her other hand is placed upon her trembling heart ; the sight of that dear Child makes her unmindful of the misery around her ! How venerable is the

appearance of Joseph, and in what a devout manner he raises his hands to heaven ! How honest and upright are the countenances of the shepherds—with what piety and devotion are they kneeling ! And the angels above them—with what heavenly beauty they are adorned ! And the light which beams from the Child, illuminating all around Him, surpasses the splendour of the Angels themselves. He must have a heart of stone who does not rejoice at the birth of a Saviour, and join the heavenly choir in celebrating the glory of the Eternal.”

‘The forester had hitherto examined the picture in silence, never taking his eyes from it or uttering a single word ; but on a sudden, as if awaking from a dream, he exclaimed, “ Yes, you are right. When this divine story, so ably represented, is before us, it has a particular effect on our hearts. I would try to express all the thoughts it gives rise to, and all the feelings it inspires.” He drew his arm-chair to a little distance from the picture, and thus began : “ We are desirous, my dear children, to direct our looks to the holy Child in the manger. For some moments let us not think of His heavenly origin,

but let us regard Him as a mere human child. Feeble and helpless, and wrapped in coarse swaddling clothes, He reposes on a little hay and straw. But His mother greets Him with a soft smile, and lavishes the most tender cares upon Him; the faithful foster-father, full of interest, stays at His side, ready to protect with his strong arm the mother and child, and to support them with the labour of his hands. A good father, a tender mother, a child who, though hardly arrived at the age of reason, repays their love with gratitude,—is that not the finest sight upon earth—a sight at which the Angels themselves rejoice? This affecting union we owe to God. Oh, my dears, when you see this new-born babe in the manger, say to yourselves, ‘I also, in my infancy, was feeble and incapable of helping myself. I should have died for want of food, had not my parents tenderly cherished me. But I was received with joy and happiness; all was prepared for *my* arrival. My mother wrapped me in the linen which she herself had spun, bleached, and made up for me—night and day she devoted her whole time to me. When I slept, she watched near my cradle, and her anx-

iety for me often deprived her of sleep. My father shared her solicitude, and worked for my support.' Never forget these cares, and thank God for having given you good parents. It is He who filled your mother's heart with this inexpressible love ; it is He who inspired your father with such love for you. Be not, then, ungrateful towards your parents. A son, or a daughter, who could forget what their mother has suffered for their sake, or how much trouble it has cost their father to feed, clothe, and bring them up, would be devoid of all feeling. After having looked at the holy family, let us glance at the Angels which float above them, and then upon the animals which are in the stable. But first of all, let us look once more at the blessed Virgin ; her face is expressive of divine innocence and of the greatest maternal tenderness. See then that divine Child, whose smile is so gracious, and whose eyes shine like stars : then look down at the rough coarse heads of the ox and ass. Observe how they put forwards their noses, thinking only of their food ; they know no greater pleasure. Who can see the man standing by them, and not acknowledge him to

be a being of a superior nature, belonging to a higher class ? The most vulgar of men would think himself insulted, if one were to say that he was not of more value than the ox that draws the plough, or the ass that bears the burden, who after death perish. No ; man is more like the Angels of God, who can acknowledge their Creator, and sing His praise ; for he is the only earthly creature who can do so. Whatever analogy he may have to the animals, he is much nearer allied to the heavenly Angels. Although he enters the world with tears, and suffers much while in it, flourishing but for a time, to fade at last like the flower of the field,—although he becomes dust like the animals, it is only his outward form that does so. He has in him an immortal spirit ; he is an Angel under a material form. As soon as this earthly covering drops, man becomes perfect as the angels, provided he has fulfilled his destination upon earth, and has lived conformably to the will of his heavenly Father. The painter has done well to add a lamb and a basket of fruit as being presented to the new-born child. All earthly creatures are subject to man ; he subdues the strongest beasts,

and compels them to serve him ; the sheep gives to him its flesh and its wool ; and earth produces for him its finest fruits. God has made man only a little lower than the angels ; He has crowned him with glory and honour ; He has made him lord of all His works, and has subjected all to his dominion. The very place in which we perceive this child and His parents, the miserable crib in the lowly stable, is not without its meaning. Man requires not the aid of a palace to fulfil his destiny ; he may live happily in the meanest cabin, and die there in peace. We see nought in the stable but poverty and indigence. To be really happy and worthy of honour, man wants neither velvet, nor silk, nor gold, nor silver. In all matters of real importance, God has made no distinction between men. My children, all that I have until now told you is most consoling to us ; but the finest portion of the story, humanly speaking, is to come. The most important circumstance is the heavenly origin and high destination of this holy child ; for Jesus Christ, the Son of the Almighty, became man, descended upon earth for the salvation of mankind (which was fallen from its state of purity

and dignity), and to lead it again to God. In Him is manifested the goodness of the Most High ; in Him we see God concealed under the form of a mortal. Born in the extremest poverty, He was cradled in a manger, had not where to lay His head, and died on the cross like a malefactor. And yet without help, without riches or any warlike pomp, He changed the aspect of the earth by His divine wisdom, His love, and His omnipotence ; He has enlightened, ennobled, and saved the human race, and thus proved His divine origin. These are the ideas which are suggested by the view of this picture, in the same manner as if it were the Scripture itself. You see, it is at night ; darkness covers the country, and the scene is only illuminated by the light which the holy child sheds around Him. Thus, at the time of Christ's birth, did the darkness of ignorance and paganism cover the earth ; but in Him a light appeared which shone upon all mankind. They were plunged in sin and vice ; they were become like the beasts of the stable, many among them were even more degraded by their wickedness ; but Christ came to convert them, and to make all who believed

in Him better men, saints, angels under a human form. Before He came, men were as miserable as they were ignorant and vicious. But observe all those who surround the manger of Jesus, how happy they are, how they rejoice in His birth ! At sight of the new-born Saviour, Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, all seem to be lifted above the cares of life. He who was to deliver mankind from their misery brings them pure joy and heavenly peace. Behold Him there who began at the moment of His birth to accomplish His sacred mission. The words of the angel were addressed to the whole world : “ Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people ; for to you is born a Saviour, even Christ the Lord.’ We are all of us allowed to approach Him. He first discovered Himself to poor and simple country people, to shepherds. His mother also was poor ; His foster-father was a workman, who gained his livelihood by the sweat of his brow. While contemplating this scene, we are taught that riches, honours, and human wisdom, have no price in His eyes ; He only desires that men’s wills may be pure, like the blessed Virgin, the upright Joseph,

- and the shepherds, those pious honest men, full of the fear of the Lord. Nevertheless He will receive even the greatest sinner, provided he repents of his sins, and has a firm intention of forsaking them. 'This is what the child's name signified; this is why the angel announced to Mary the message from God, 'Thou shalt call His name Jesus;' and why he repeated the command to Joseph, 'Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.' Notwithstanding its corruption, the human race was to become His people, the holy people of God. It is for this reason that the sky above the manger is represented as open. Jesus was to open again to men that heaven which had been shut to them; was to found a heavenly kingdom upon earth, and thus to reunite heaven and earth. This is why the angels of God rejoiced with exceeding great joy: they glorified God, and congratulated men upon the salvation which was prepared for them through Christ. Jesus has now accomplished that which His birth announced, however great have been the obstacles which the unbelief and the obstinacy of men opposed to Him. He established

the kingdom of heaven upon earth, and His work yet subsists. Many conquerors have since that time founded terrestrial kingdoms, but these have had a short duration, and have crumbled away even before the eyes of their founders. The kingdom of Jesus, the church, extends more and more, and has lasted even to our days. Whole nations have been converted to His faith, and princes have made the cross the ornament of their crowns. Human sacrifices, and all the other abominations of paganism, disappeared from Christian countries. A crowd of temples and churches arose, where the worship of the true God and divine truth was taught. Innumerable schools, charitable establishments, and hospitals, were built by Christian humanity. How many children, how many poor and sick, must have perished in ignorance, in crime, and in misery, without these charitable institutions ! Millions of men find in the faith of Christ the assurance of pardon for their former sins, and guided by its lessons have become better men. And at this present time, in spite of the increase of impiety, there are countless souls devoted to His service, who find in Him their consolation

in life and in death ; and the Gospel, the glad tidings, is even now being preached to the heathen ; and savage nations, embracing the faith of Christ, congratulate each other on the divine truths which are announced to them. For this reason, the day of Christ's birth is the most important in the history of the human race ; and our wise ancestors began with reason a new era on that day. Each year that passes should recall to our remembrance that the birth of Christ is also the birth of all those who will lay open their hearts to Him. Now then, my children, let us join our voices to the angels' hymn, and offer our homage to our Saviour."

Thus spoke the forester. His wife, much affected, added, " Yes, my children, let us glorify Jesus. The splendid picture sent us by Anthony is the most valuable present that any one, even that a prince, could have made us. The devout attention with which you have listened to the exhortation of your father is the fittest manner of celebrating this sacred evening. We will receive with gratitude the salvation sent us by God in the person of the new-born Saviour ; thus the day of the Redeemer's birth will also become that of our salvation."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MISFORTUNES OF THE FORESTER.



FROM the time of Anthony's departure, the excellent forester lived a tranquil and happy life. His children were grown up; his son had become a strong active young man; the blooming freshness of his daughters could not be surpassed; and the conduct of all was the just recompense for the care he had bestowed upon their education. Little by little the good old man began to suffer the infirmities of age; and he entertained the idea of giving up his situation to his son. The prince his master came regularly every year for some days to the Castle of Fel-seck, as he was extremely fond of shooting. His manners were most affable, and he listened with the greatest condescension to any thing that the

meanest of his subjects might have to say. On his arrival he sported in that wood of which the old forester had the care; and finding it in the best possible order, he advanced to the forester, and tapping him on the shoulder, said, "How goes it with you, good man?"

"Please your highness," said the keeper, "I begin to grow old, and I would willingly shift my burden to younger shoulders."

"Well," said the prince, "to your son Christian's, I suppose? I see him yonder. He is a good sportsman, and, what I value more, a clever forester. I have remarked, during my walk this morning, that these woods are perfectly well attended to. Depend on me, no one else shall have your situation, and he may meanwhile commence business. But I should wish you some time longer to continue the superintendence, under the title of head forester. The best young people become careless and presumptuous when they are too soon allowed to wear an embroidered uniform. It is for my advantage as well as your own that you should still remain in office."

The forester expressed his gratitude to the prince, and then added, "There is yet another

subject on which I wish to speak to your highness. My son has at present an opportunity of making a desirable marriage with the daughter of my old friend Bosh, who died some time ago; this young girl has just lost her mother, and knows not what she ought to do. She is poor, but honest, industrious, good, and modest."

"I consent most willingly to your son's marrying," said the prince; "and I commend him for seeking for innocence and virtue more than for fortune. I promise to give him the succession of the forester's office; and I will take care to have the agreement written out."

The keeper's son, who had been waiting in great anxiety at some distance, now advanced upon a sign from his father, and thanked the prince. The marriage took place; the young woman proved a blessing to the family; peace and unanimity dwelt under the good forester's roof, who before long had the happiness of embracing his grandchildren, the care of whom seemed to bring a renewal of youth to his excellent wife. The daughters of the house also loved the young woman like a sister, and they were all extremely happy. But this worthy

family soon experienced a change of fortune, brought about by a circumstance which had occurred long before,—so long as to have totally escaped the forester's memory. The young Mr. de Schilf, who had often been his companion in the field, soon took the liberty of beating the covers without the keeper's permission; he even took upon himself to kill all the game he could find without mercy. The forester meeting him one day, told him that poaching was strictly forbidden, and that if he wished to enjoy the pleasure of shooting, he must continue to go to his house, when he would always accompany him and show him the best sport, and that he might then shoot what he pleased; but that he could not allow him to shoot alone in the covers which he had the care of. The young gentleman, however, did not desist. The forester again met him, took from him his gun, saying, at the same time, "God knows with what regret I do this; but it is my duty, and I have no alternative. Should I again meet you, I shall be obliged to serve you with a notice, and it may then become a very serious affair for you." The honest keeper also went to the elder Mr. de Schilf, and entreat-

ed him to keep a watch over the conduct of his son. This gentleman usually allowed the young man to have his own way entirely ; but at this information he became exceedingly angry ; for he was afraid of drawing upon himself the displeasure of the prince. He threatened to disinherit his son if ever he went shooting again without the keeper. But the young man was too much accustomed to disobedience to heed his father's word. A short time afterwards, hearing the report of a gun, and running to the spot whence the sound appeared to proceed, the keeper found the younger De Schilf standing near a stag which he had just killed. He accordingly brought an action against him. The elder De Schilf addressed himself to the prince to obtain his son's pardon ; the answer he received was, that according to law, his son ought to go to prison. " But," said the prince, " I will pardon him this once. Should it, however, again occur, let him be assured that he will certainly be conducted to prison ; and you may well imagine that I shall never choose any servant or officer of mine from a place of confinement."

The affair was thus concluded ; but young De

Schilf conceived a mortal hatred against the forester, and through a long course of years he thirsted for an opportunity of revenging himself. The reigning prince dying suddenly, and his heir being yet a minor and on his travels, a regency was appointed, and many changes took place in the country. The younger Mr. de Schilf, who was very rich, and had powerful friends, obtained the situation of ranger. The Castle of Felseck was appointed as his residence, and he came with great ceremony to take possession of it. He thus became head over the forester, and never allowed an opportunity to escape him of annoying him; he was perpetually finding fault with him, and the poor keeper could never do any thing to please him. At last the hereditary prince came into possession; but Mr. de Schilf, who was very clever and eloquent, succeeded in obtaining the good opinion of the surveyor of the woods and waters, who was much esteemed by the prince. Upon this he behaved to the forester with more insolence and animosity than ever. "You are no longer fit for service," said he one day to the old man; "and I shall endeavour to pro-

cure a more proper superintendent for these fine woods."

The forester replied, "I resign my charge most willingly; and I should long ago have done so, if the deceased prince had allowed me to do it. My son is therefore now keeper and forester."

"You think so," said Mr. de Schilf, smiling disdainfully. "I imagine I should have known something about it."

The forester appealed to the agreement of the prince, in consequence of which his son had married.

"Oh," said Mr. de Schilf, "all that I know very well;" and he explained it in the following artful manner: "This is a simple promise, depending on good behaviour, that is all; but this boy is good for nothing. I shall, I hope, make a better choice."

The poor old forester could hardly restrain his tears. "Mr. Ranger," said he, "do not be unjust. You conceived yourself injured by me; but this is only another reason why you should fear to do me harm."

"What!" cried Mr. de Schilf, "you dare to

remind me of your own impertinence ; you yourself call to my remembrance that you deprived me of the sole enjoyment of my youth, and defamed me at court ? You are an impudent rascal, who have never shown any respect for your superiors, but have encouraged beggars. You allowed your son to marry a girl without a penny, a regular pauper ; you spent your money on that little good-for-nothing wretched Anthony ; you never knew how to economize your own fortune—how, then, should you be able to dispose of that of another, or watch over the interest of the prince ? Go—go—you are of no further use. I trust we may be soon independent of each other ; till when, pray keep out of my sight.”

The forester retired, saying to himself, “ Let the ranger say what he may, my woods are in the best possible order. Notwithstanding the malice he shows me, he can do me no harm.”

When he went home he made no mention of what had passed to his family, being unwilling to annoy them unnecessarily ; but shortly afterwards, one evening on his return from the forest, he had scarcely had time to seat himself in his arm-chair, when a messenger from the office

of the woods and forests made his appearance, bearing a letter. This paper signified that the old forester was discharged from his situation on account of incapacity occasioned by old age ; and that while inquiries were made after another forester to replace him, the care of the forest should be committed to the neighbouring forester living at Waldenbusch. Not a word was said of a pension for the old man who had been of so much service, nor of any employment for his son. It was moreover added, that from the time of the discharge being delivered to the woodman, he was forbidden to fire a shot, or to carry a gun, under pain of arrest. The old man was astounded, and his hand trembled violently ; but soon recovering himself, he read the paper aloud to his wife and children, who were seated around him at their different occupations. The wife and daughters grew pale with alarm, while the young man burned with indignation at the malice of the ranger. His young wife, after a moment's silence, began to weep bitterly, and her children, who were playing near her, wept also at the sight of their mother's tears. It was a scene of complete despair. The venerable old man alone remained

calm amidst his family. "Forget not," said he, "that God remains to us. Be then the first to dry your tears, my dear wife, and give our children an example of trust in God. Bad men can do us no harm without His permission. It is He who sends us this trial, which will one day or other turn to our profit. Be of good courage. God is all-powerful; He is our protector, and even when the whole world abandons us, He will be with us. Our heavenly Father, who is the giver of all good, will never let us want for bread; let us put our trust in Him, and not despair." He however added, "I will not neglect any thing that may be in our favour. Early to-morrow morning I will set out for the capital. The prince is as generous as his deceased father; and whatever may be his occupations at this commencement of his administration, he will listen to me; he will never allow his old servant for fifty years, with his wife, his children, and grandchildren, who has faithfully fulfilled his duty, to die of hunger. Christian, you must accompany me; we may now both absent ourselves without leave of the ranger. We shall go on foot, for in our present circumstances,

horse or carriage-travelling would be far too expensive, even if it were necessary. Our game-bags will carry the clothes which we want for the journey—so bestir yourselves, that all may be ready early to-morrow.” The next morning before daylight the good man was up, and awakening his son, said, “Let us be off; I cannot wait until sunrise; there is moonlight, and we know our way.”

The old woman carefully folded up her husband’s green and gold embroidered uniform in a clean napkin, that it might be more easily packed in the game-bag; Catherine attended to the linen and provisions for the journey; and the young wife and Louisa set out the breakfast which they had prepared. The children still slept.

“And when do you purpose returning?” said the forester’s wife to him.

“I cannot say for certain,” replied he; “probably not for a week.”

“To-morrow fortnight will be Christmas eve,” said the good woman; “before that time you will surely return?”

“I hope to be here in a week,” replied he;

"but happen what may, I am determined to celebrate Christmas eve with you."

"God grant that it may be a joyful meeting!" said the wife.

"In the mean time pray, and put your trust in God," said her husband. "All that He lays upon us is for our final good."

The two travellers were accompanied to the door of the house by the whole family. It was very dark, and the middle of a terribly cold December night. Those who were left behind could not conceal their uneasiness; they trembled for the health of the old forester. During the first week the good people found great difficulty in tranquillizing their minds; but when one day after another passed away, and the weather became rainy and disagreeable, they abandoned themselves to the liveliest anxiety. "Ah," said they, "Christian, though strong and healthy, will have much to bear; but what will become of our poor old father?"

The children were incessantly running to the door to see if their father and grandfather were arrived. Another week had passed away in the greatest inquietude, to add to which, one of the

ranger's huntsmen delivered an official paper. The wife of the forester dared not open it, fearing that its contents might be of bad import; the lacquey having remarked, in an impertinent manner, "that the forester was a silly old man to set out for the palace with his wild son. The ranger is on the safe side, and they will get nothing but shame for their pains."

Nevertheless the family of Grünewald prayed daily to God for the travellers' safe return as well as for their favourable reception at the court of the prince.



CHAPTER VII.

THE FORESTER'S FURTHER DISASTERS.



IN the midst of these dismal occurrences Christmas eve arrived. Night closed in sooner than usual, for the sky was overcast with thick clouds. A stormy wind whistled through the old oaks, and bent the pines of the forest.

It snowed and rained; and the water from the gutters of the roof resembled torrents from the top of a rock.

“Alas!” exclaimed the old woman, after having looked out of the window for some time, “they do not come. Should they not arrive for this Christmas eve, some misfortune must surely have befallen them. My anxiety becomes insupportable. The weather is terrific, and the roads must be impassable. If they were but returned,

all my cares would vanish," added she, again opening the window. A moment passed. "God be praised!" she exclaimed, "they are here!" All ran to the door to question them as to the issue of their visit to the town.

"I hope," said the old man, "that all will turn out for the best; but you must have been uneasy about us; we have been a long time away. I was obliged by illness to stop on the road; and when I recovered, the rivers and brooks were so swollen by these heavy rains, that we were detained for several days. But, God be praised! here we are." And entering the house he changed his clothes, and seated himself in his arm-chair by the fire. His wife brought a lamp, a bottle of wine and two glasses.

"Refresh yourselves a little," said she, pouring out some wine. "you must be in great want of it. Supper will be ready directly."

"Very well," said the forester, looking around him by the light of the lamp. "It is a blessing to find oneself at home, surrounded by joyful and affectionate faces." But the young man had whispered to his wife that things were not going on so smoothly, and that probably the forester

would lose his place. Being much alarmed, she confided the intelligence to the rest of the family ; and the old man quickly perceived that their countenances were overcast with fear and anxiety. "Christian has been chattering," said he, "so I have nothing more to conceal. You shall know all ; but do not give way to sorrow. On this night our Saviour was born ; and the joy which we ought to feel should make us forget all earthly cares, or at least prevent us from fretting about them. We arrived late in the evening at the capital," continued he ; "but, late as it was, I called on the minister of the forests, Mr. Müller. He is an upright man, said I to myself. He was for a long time over me as ranger ; and was always my friend. The other members of the council are dead, or retired ; and although he also has declined having any thing to do with affairs, on account of his age, he may be able to advise me well. The worthy man received me most cordially. After I had laid open to him the object of my journey, he said, ' You have a very dangerous enemy in the ranger ; who is supported by powerful interest. He wishes to place a former servant of his in your situation, and he is con-

tinually making unfavourable reports of your conduct and that of your son ; and I much fear that he will succeed, and deprive good Christian of his father's office.' I answered him, that I intended myself to go to the prince. 'Do so,' said my adviser ; 'and I will accompany you : but you arrive at an unfavourable moment. His highness is much occupied just now ; and you will find difficulty in being admitted. You must also call on the director-general of the administration of the forests as well as on the ministers ; but I fear you will not have a good reception, Mr. de Schilf has prejudiced them all against you.' I found that Mr. Müller was perfectly right. The director-general received me very coldly, and granted me but a moment's audience. The ministers treated me hardly any better ; I saw only gloomy countenances ; and I was obliged to endure very hard words. The prince did not receive me, because the director-general was with him at that very time. Mr. de Schilf had most artfully calumniated both me and Christian ; but as you understand nothing of these things I will drop this subject. Our only hope now was to lay an information ; but it is to be feared that those to whom

our cause may be committed will be ill disposed towards us. Enough of this. On this evening all Christendom should rejoice; it is Christmas eve. Let us meditate on our Saviour's birth; this thought will dispel our sorrows."

He turned his eyes towards the picture of the birth of Jesus, Anthony's beautiful present. It occupied the place of the looking-glass, and was covered with a veil for its preservation.

The young forester's two lovely children, Francis and Clara, had anticipated the celebration of Christmas eve with great pleasure. They rose; and wiping away their tears, asked their grandmother to remove the veil from the picture, and to light the wax candles, as she had done the year before, so as to see it better. "And, grandfather," said Clara, "take your harp, that we may sing the Christmas carols which mother taught us."

"You are right," said the forester; "let us sing a Christmas carol."

"But first," added he, "has any thing particular occurred during our absence?"

"Nothing at all," replied his wife, "but the arrival of another government paper;" at the same time placing the sealed letter in his hand.

He opened it with much agitation, and raising his eyes to heaven, exclaimed, "Thy will O Lord be done!"

Every one looked anxiously towards him.

"What is it?" said the grandmother.

"We must leave this house directly," answered he; "indeed we ought already to have quitted it. The ranger orders us in this letter to leave the house at the latest on Christmas eve, in order that the new woodman may enter upon his new office during the holydays. He threatens us, in case of disobedience, to have us turned out by the sheriff's officers. I am surprised that they are not already here; we may expect them every moment to turn us out of doors."

"Heavens," exclaimed the young woman; "in this dreadful night? Only listen how it pours, and how the wind whistles! Where shall we find a shelter from the storm and rain?" and pressing her two children to her breast she sank upon a chair. "Gracious God," exclaimed she, "have pity on these innocents!" Her husband, standing motionless by her side, regarded her and his children with tearful eyes.

"Oh, my God!" said the old woman, sobbing

and wringing her hands ; “ to be turned out in my old age, with our children and our grandchildren, from the house where I was born, and where my father and grandfather lived. Gracious God ! let me die in the place of my birth.”

Catherine wept in silence ; Louisa trembled like a lamb led to slaughter ; while the venerable-looking old forester, with his bald forehead and silver hair, said, in a calm, tranquil voice, “ Yes, my dear children, this house we must leave ; and where to seek for hospitality for us all, I know not ; we must therefore separate. I did hope, it is true, to have enjoyed amongst you a peaceful old age ; I did hope to have seen you gathered round my death-bed under this roof ; but God has otherwise decided it ; let us submit to His holy will.” He glanced towards his grandchildren, and then continued, “ If our hearts are wounded at the sight of their tears, is not the fatherly heart of God more tender still than ours ? Surely when He sends us such heavy trials, He does it in the most perfect wisdom. This very sorrow will turn to our good. Our ancestors said, from experience, that when trouble is at its highest pitch, then does God send help. We

have often celebrated the feast of Christmas eve in this very chamber, in joy ; it is now God's will that we should pass it in sorrow : let us learn to submit with resignation."

" You are quite right, my dear husband," said the good woman. " We will throw all our care upon Providence, and remain calm under the misfortune which strikes us. I have often put myself into the place of the blessed Mary, who was not only obliged to pass the night in a stable, but who was also, like us, obliged to leave her dwelling in the night, and to carry the holy Child into a strange land. However great her faith, her love for her Child must have often caused her to shed tears. Her anxieties were heart-rending. Every person during his sojourn upon earth must suffer as she did ; for God tries all His children. The events of the sacred history are, as one may say, renewed in us. But he who sent Mary in the stable—while on her melancholy journey—comforting friends and angels for her guides, will not leave us comfortless, and will help us in his own good time."

At that moment knockings were heard at the door. " Here they are to unhouse us," said the old man.

His son shuddered, and glancing at his gun, said, "Let them come! let them dare to turn my old parents, my dear wife and children, and my sisters, out of doors; and the first that lays a hand on either of you I ——"

"Oh! no, no, my son," said the father, "do not finish the terrible words which you were about to pronounce. God is above them and us; He only is our refuge and protection. Should our prayers and representations have no effect on these men, we will leave the house without being forced to do so; and we will take refuge for the night in that cavern which has so often sheltered us in our sporting expeditions. Alas!" said he rising, "would that we could all look forward with confidence into the future; and place our destiny in the hands of Him whose goodness towards us equals His power."



CHAPTER VIII.

THE UNEXPECTED VISITOR.



MORE knocking at the door followed, and the forester ordered his son to open it, when in a few moments there stepped into the room a stranger; he was a tall well-looking man, enveloped in a dark green cloak with a fur cap shading great part of his face. "This is the new forester," said they all with alarm: but the stranger himself seemed frightened at the tearful eyes and pale cheeks which he saw before him.

Having taken off his cap, he remained for a moment motionless, and then said, "So you do not know me?"

At last Louisa suddenly exclaimed, "It is Anthony!"

"Anthony!" cried Catherine; "is it possible?"

"What are you thinking of?" said the old woman; "this gentleman is much taller and stouter than Anthony."

"Indeed it is he," said Christian, "it is Anthony. For heaven's sake, my dear brother, what brings you here? I thought you were at Rome, hundreds of miles away."

The old man rubbed his eyes, and doubting the evidence of his own senses, slowly advanced, when all at once, catching him in his arms, he exclaimed, "Oh, my son Anthony!" and they remained closely embraced for some moments. Anthony then pressed his venerable mother to his heart, and in their turn his brother and sisters; his joy at the sight of them was unbounded. He also showed great interest in the young wife and her children, whom he now saw for the first time.

The happiness of this unexpected meeting banished sorrow. The good old grandmother was the first to remind him of their painful situation. "My dear Anthony," said she, "you

arrive at a very unfortunate moment for us ; sit near me, that I may talk to you of our disasters."

"I know all," said he : "but have no further anxiety, my dear parents ; your affairs are mending. I have seen the prince, my dear father ; and he desired to be kindly remembered to you."

"To me !" said the old man ; "how did you get to speak to the prince ? I am amazed, and can only look on this as a happy dream."

"No, no," replied Anthony, "it is all true ; seat yourself in your own chair, dear father—and you also my worthy mother sit here and listen to my story." The delighted parents seated themselves on each side of him ; and surrounded by the other members of the family, who listened with attention and astonishment, he began : "Our present prince as you well know travelled some time ago in Italy. When at Rome he visited an exhibition, where all the newest pictures of young artists were exposed. Among these pictures there was one which pleased him particularly ; and on inquiring, he found that the painter was a young man named Anthony Croner. He sent for me, praised my work excessively, and behaved towards me with the greatest affability.

He asked me to fix a price for my picture; and with a generosity equal to his high birth, he paid me much more than I demanded. Very often, when he visited the most celebrated pictures at Rome, he invited me to accompany him. I went with him in his carriage, and often dined at his table. About that time there was at Rome a sale of several old pictures of great beauty. The prince wished me to view them with him; and whenever a subject pleased him, he asked my opinion of its worth. The collection was to be sold by auction, and the day was fixed; but the prince could not be present, as he was obliged to return to his country, to take the conduct of affairs. He commissioned me to purchase the pictures for him, and to be careful that they reached him uninjured. I felt much flattered by this confidence, and took great pains in fulfilling his commission. I was fortunate enough to obtain the paintings for a much less sum than that to which I had been limited. Having seen all that was worth a painter's notice in Italy, I determined to return to my own country; and learning that a vessel was on the point of sailing, I embarked with all my collection, and landed

safely with my precious treasure. I then hired a carriage to convey the pictures; and that they might not be damaged, I did not lose sight of them until their arrival in the capital. On quitting the carriage, I hastened to court, and sent in my name. 'The prince rising from table, received me in his own room. 'Welcome to Germany,' said he to me with great kindness; 'what beautiful things do you bring me from Italy?' 'The pictures,' I replied, 'that your highness commissioned me to purchase for you.' 'And how many of them have you succeeded in getting?' said he, quickly. 'All, your highness.' 'What, all!' said he joyfully; 'that is excellent.' He then gave orders that the pictures should be unpacked and hung up. I assisted in the work, and they were all found to be perfect. The prince was delighted. I delivered him up the receipts of the sums I had paid. 'The purchase-money is much less,' said he, 'than the sum I had allowed you to go to.' I asked him to whom I should remit the money which remained in my hands. 'Oh,' said he, with great affability, 'do not mention that; for I owe you a debt of gratitude; and if you are satisfied with me, I am still more

so with you. But you must be fatigued with your journey, and you have exerted yourself in unpacking—go and rest yourself.’ He ordered me a room in the palace. Upon retiring, I resolved on a visit to the old counsellor Müller, who was (except the prince) the only person I knew ; and I well remembered, as head ranger, he used often to visit you, and was very intimate with you. He asked what business had brought me to the residence ; and when I told him, he said, ‘ You arrive at a very fortunate time ;’ and then he gave me an account of the trouble which the ranger had caused you ; how you had come to the residence ; and in short, how you had been obliged to go away without having succeeded in your wishes. I expressed a desire to return instantly to the prince. ‘ No, no,’ said Mr. Müller, ‘ it would not do now. You may ask to have a private audience early to-morrow morning, and I will accompany you. The affair is already sufficiently advanced to secure us a favourable reception.’ We were accordingly received on the following morning ; and I spoke of you,—I related with warmth in what manner you had received me into your house, and told the

prince all that you had done for me—I went into the minutest details. Mr. Müller frequently interrupted me with ‘true, true;’ but the prince smiling, said, ‘Let him speak; I am much pleased with the gratitude this good son expresses for his adopted parents; we shall know in time to what point he is coming.’ I then touched upon the subject of Mr. Schilf, and clearly explained to him why that gentleman was so prejudiced against you; and I added, that he would have been imprisoned for poaching, if the late prince had not been too indulgent towards him. ‘Now,’ said Mr. Müller, ‘you exceed the bounds of that respect which you owe to his highness. You know that princes must be indulgent; Mr. Schilf was very young, and was for that reason gently dealt with.’ ‘Go on, go on,’ said the prince. I then showed him the letters you had written to me while in Italy, in all of which you expressed your good wishes for the welfare of the hereditary prince, who was at that time in the same country with myself: these letters I had unpacked during the night. The prince did not confine himself to the passages which I pointed out to him, but kindly asked leave, to read the entire letter. ‘I

remember now,' said he, 'your speaking to me in Italy of this good father of yours. A man who can write such letters as these, and who has brought up so good a son, must be worth something.' 'For which reason,' said I, 'your highness must punish the ranger, and give the forester's son his father's office.' Mr. Muller looked angrily at me; 'Is that the way to speak to his highness?' said he. But the prince only smiled and replied, 'These affairs are not so quickly despatched, young man; the ranger's story must also be heard.' He then retired into a recess of the window with the counsellor, and conversed with him in a low tone for some time; after which Mr. Muller sat down to write; and the prince turning to me, said, 'Have no further anxiety; all will be well.' He then spoke to me of pictures, saying, that his father had left him a pretty collection, and that he longed to have my opinion of them. 'They all need repairing or arranging,' added he, 'and I intrust you with the commission, if you are disposed to accept of it.' 'It will give me the greatest pleasure to do so,' I replied; 'but I can engage in nothing till after the Christmas holidays. On Christmas eve I

first saw my revered adopted parents, and on that day I wish to see them again, particularly when I can be the means of carrying comfort to them in their present apparently melancholy situation.' 'I quite approve of your going,' said the prince; 'filial gratitude is the first of duties.' Mr. Müller having finished writing, handed the letter to the prince who signed it. 'Remember me to your good father,' said he, 'and assure the worthy old man that he has nothing to fear.' 'How familiarly you spoke to the prince,' said Mr. Müller to me on our way to my lodging: 'I endeavoured to restrain you, but you paid me no attention. Your love for your adopted parents excuses your warmth; besides which the straightest way is always the shortest.'

"I then begged him to tell me what the prince had confided to him, and what he had told him to write. After many entreaties, he at last confessed that the prince had said, 'How nearly have I been committing an act of injustice! Here is a deed, making over to another the old forester's place; but I had so many doubts that I never signed it, although no means has been left untried to make me do so. I will now look more

into this affair.' He ordered Mr. Müller to write a particular order, addressed to the ranger, the contents of which were nearly as follows: 'That his highness had learned with great displeasure the unworthy manner in which the forester Grunewald had been treated by the ranger, who was now forbidden to annoy in any manner either the old forester or his son; and was likewise to await further orders.' The prince desired the counsellor to send this letter express; 'for,' said he, 'I am most anxious to set the worthy man's heart at rest.' Mr. Müller also desired me to give his regards to you, and to tell you, that the commands of the prince were sure to turn every thing to your advantage; and that your son would, without any doubt, hold the place of keeper."

During this recital, the old forester and his family had often occasion to wipe their eyes; and when Anthony had done speaking, the old man rose and embraced him; and taking off the veil which covered the picture of the Nativity, threw a glance of gratitude towards heaven, exclaiming, "Let us unite with the Angels in praising God. Glory to God in heaven, and peace upon earth to all those who have pure hearts!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE.



AFTER Anthony had finished his recital, he inquired, with great interest, after the health of his dear parents. He could not but remark with sorrow how aged they had become during his absence ; he almost wept at the sight of their silvered locks and countless wrinkles, although he concealed his own affliction for fear of increasing theirs. On the other hand, he was pleasingly surprised to find Christian, Catherine, and Louisa, in the flower of their age. He drew Christian's children towards him. "How time passes !" he exclaimed. "Eighteen years ago, Christian, Catherine, and myself, were just such children as these, and Louisa was still younger ;

and now they occupy our places." He felt much pleasure at seeing these children ; and asked them if they had received any Christmas boxes.

" Oh, no !" said little Frank ; " the ranger has spoiled our holyday ; he is a real Herod."

His mother reproved him for speaking in such a manner.

" I am sure, Anthony," said little Clara in her turn, " that an angel brought you here ; but have you brought us a Christmas gift."

" To be sure," said he ; " I have not forgotten you ; only you must await the arrival of my carriage and its baggage."

This anticipation contented the children, and enabled them to wait with patience for morning. Supper was then served ; but there was more talking than eating, the children alone doing honour to the good cheer ; they soon went to bed : but the rest of the party remained together some time longer.

" We must prepare a surprise for these little dears," said Anthony. " We will have a Christmas tree for them. In some countries the manger is represented on this evening ; in others, a Christmas tree is exhibited. Christian will want

little persuasion to go and get a nice young fir-tree this very night to please his children; I having brought from Eschenthal every thing that is necessary to ornament it. I left my coachman there and his horses (which were over tired), and I took the mountain path that I might get here sooner. I expect my carriage and trunks before sunrise to-morrow."

Very early on the following morning, while the children still slept, the inhabitants of the house were busied in preparing the Christmas tree. A fine young fir, with green tufted branches, was placed in a corner between the two windows. When the carriage was unpacked, Anthony opened a large box filled with every article that could please a child. He fastened all his little presents to the branches—as well as fine fruit, variegated *bons-bons*, beautiful little baskets full of sugared almonds, wreaths of artificial flowers tied with blue or pink ribbons—all of which he arranged very tastefully; and finally he melted wax into a number of little tin lamps, and fixed them carefully on the tree, that they might illuminate without burning it. When all was completed, Catherine and Louisa were going to awaken the children.

“Do not bring them in,” said Anthony, “until I have lighted the lamps; and their mother will call them.”

No sooner did the children hear something about presents than sleep forsook their eyes; and they could not be dressed too quickly. But when their mother cried, “Now come!” they rushed into the room, and, dazzled by the splendour and brillianey which met their sight, they stopped short, silent with astonishment and delight. Staring, with half-open mouths, they could not take their eyes from the dazzling tree. The beautiful green of the branches, the lights which, like stars, beamed through them, the fine red apples, the golden pears, and all the many-coloured shining things, appeared like the work of enchantment. They hardly knew whether they were dreaming or not; but finding their speech at last, they exclaimed, “How beautiful! how magnificent!”

“In the whole of our forest,” said Frank, “you could not find so beautiful a tree, or one that produced such a fine variety of fruit.”

“To be sure,” said Clara, “such trees only grow in paradise or in heaven. Mother, did not our Saviour Christ send us this tree?”

“Not exactly as you see it,” said her mother; “but it is to Him that you owe the pleasure you are feeling—to Jesus, who was once a child, and who is now in heaven; for if he had not come down upon earth, we should have had neither presents nor happiness at Christmas.”

“Well,” said both the children, “we should like very much to love and obey Him; He is so good, and loves children so dearly. I do not suppose any body was ever so happy before as we are.”

“My dears,” said the grandmother, “it would indeed be difficult to feel a purer joy than yours. Innocent children are doubtless the happiest beings on earth; their joys are all pure and tranquil. God preserve you good and innocent! Ah!” said she addressing herself to the other members of the party, “the pleasures of a more advanced age are too often embittered by uneasiness and sorrow, by ambition, avarice and other passions, nay, often by remorse; therefore are the words of our blessed Saviour so true and so beautiful: ‘Except ye be as one of these little ones, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.’”

The grandfather then added, “This custom of

ornamenting a Christmas tree is very pleasing. Our ancestors showed as much wisdom as prudence in seeking to render the rites of Christianity interesting to children. This innocent pleasure makes them love these holydays, and prepares their hearts to share the greatest joys that religion has to offer. Every year, from this time, our dear children shall have their Christmas tree ; and even if it should not be so richly ornamented as this one, it will give them very great pleasure ; so little pleases children : a few apples and pears and gilded nuts make up for the want of more costly presents. Every parent must be happy in procuring such innocent joys for his children. I think also that the Christmas tree might be made of use as a matter of education, and often be rendered of greater service than the rod. Children who have once enjoyed the sight of such a tree, will anticipate for the whole year long the delight of having such another ; and the threat of depriving them of it will surely have much more effect than the severest punishment."

The parents expressed their thanks to Anthony for the pleasure he had procured to their children.

“Do not mention such trifles,” said he. “I must beg you also to accept some Christmas gifts;” and opening a chest which stood in the corner of the room, “You gave me this trunk abundantly filled,” said he, “when I set out on my journey; and it is but fair that I should return it not entirely empty:” and presenting the good old woman with some silks and valuable furs, he added, “It is the duty of a good son to clothe his parents warmly during the hard weather.” For the young wife and the two sisters he brought green sarsnets for dresses, Milan silk handkerchiefs, and other articles of dress. To Christian he presented an excellent double-barrelled gun, the stock of which was of walnut-wood, richly embossed with silver. “You, my dear father,” said Anthony, addressing the old forester, “ought not to shoot any more; you must rest from your labours; and you ought to have some strengthening cordials at your advanced age; here is a basketful of good old Rhine wine of the very best quality, and here is a goblet to drink it out of;” at the same time presenting him with a silver drinking cup, gilt in the inside. In the centre of a wreath of oak-

leaves were engraved these words : " To my dear father, Frederick Grunewald, in remembrance of the Christmas eve of 1740 ; presented on Christmas day 1758, by his grateful son Anthony Croner." The old forester pressed Anthony to his heart. The latter then placed in his hands a rouleau of gold pieces : " My dearest Father," said he, " you spent a great deal upon me ; and it would be very unjust that your children and grandchildren should suffer for me. The old man declined accepting the last present. " It is no gift of mine," said Anthony ; " our good prince has enriched me ; and his generosity gives me the power of repaying you a small part of the debt of gratitude which I can never entirely acquit myself of." Here the old man again embraced his adopted son ; and the whole family partook of his emotion.

" Ah ! dear Anthony," said the old woman, " who would have thought that, on Christmas eve years ago, when you first came to us, you would now prepare us such a fête, or that, by your interest with the prince, you would be the means of delivering us from our sad condition ;

thereby repaying us over and over again for any thing we may have done for you?"

"It has all been brought about by God," said Anthony. "He led me to your house, that He might bless you through me: glory be to His name!—I must now," continued Anthony, "leave you."

"Why? how?" exclaimed they all.

"I go to Mr. Riedinger," replied he. "I hope to be in the town in time for divine service, and afterwards to surprise my excellent master by my visit, and to bring him here to-night. We will pass the Christmas holydays happily together."

They all accompanied Anthony to the carriage.

The very same evening he returned with Mr. Riedinger; and the old keeper's lodge, in the centre of the gloomy forest, sheltered for several days the happiest set of people that ever lived.

Here ends the most interesting part of Anthony's story. He asked Louisa's hand from her parents, who willingly consented. "Ah! Louisa," said her mother, "how little I thought, when you gave Anthony your apple as a Christmas box, that he would ever lead you as a bride to the altar!" The wedding was the most joyful

event that had ever taken place beneath the roof of the forester. Anthony purchased a nice house in the capital; where he had always plenty of employment, became a very celebrated painter, and lived most happily with his Louisa.

In the course of the following spring the prince arrived at the castle of Felsack, accompanied by counsellor Muller and a stranger, who was well acquainted with all matters relating to forests. The ranger, much alarmed, did not at all relish the visit. "You have exceeded my orders," said the prince. "Misled by your reports, I did indeed deprive the forester of his situation, and arranged to give an inferior one to his son; but I never intended to banish the whole family from their home, in the inhuman manner in which you have attempted to do it. Now let us see the woods." That district which was under the ranger's care was found to be terribly out of order. "His own report," said the prince, "led me to expect to find all in the best order; but the appearance of the forest is very far from answering this description. I clearly perceive that in many parts the covers exceed in number the accounts which he has rendered up: he has deceived me."

It was afterwards discovered that the ranger had sold to a neighbouring forge many thousand cords of wood, without giving any account of them. To keep up his excessive display, which equalled that of the prince himself, he not only dissipated the fortune left him by his father, but had contracted debts, and been guilty of dishonesty towards his master, who stripped him of his ill-gotten wealth, and demanded a restitution of all that he had so dishonestly pocketed.

Poor Mr. Schilf lived from that time in a small country house with the little that remained of his paternal fortune.

The prince found the portion of forest under the forester's care in the very best order. He condescended to visit him at his house; and assured him that he was content with his services. He was then introduced to, and conversed with, every member of the family in the most affable manner. Before mounting the horse which a servant held at the door, he turned to Christian, and said, "You are now keeper and forester. Take always the same care of what is confided to you." Then addressing himself to the old forester: "You are," said he, "it is true, a little advanced

in years, but you are not so decrepit as Mr. Schilf wished to make you out. In spite of your years you are still strong; and I cannot yet dispense with your services. I appoint you to another office. Remember, then, my last words—Adieu Mr. RANGER!”



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